

## Various conference definitions

1. UN World Tourism Organization's definition for group meetings and conference travel:

A gathering of 10 or more participants for a minimum of four hours in a contracted venue, more than 50 miles away from home. Meeting types include conventions, conferences, congresses, trade shows and exhibitions, incentive events, corporate/business meetings, and any other meetings where attendees conduct business, share ideas, or learn.

2. **Dept. of Health & Human Services** at [http://www.hhs.gov/asfr/ogapa/acquisition/appfundspol\\_att1.html](http://www.hhs.gov/asfr/ogapa/acquisition/appfundspol_att1.html) ) defines a conference as:

1.2 Definitions (Update) The following definitions apply in determining whether an event is a conference or a meeting:

- A conference is a symposium, seminar, workshop, or any other organized and formal meeting, whether conducted face-to-face or via the Internet, where individuals assemble (or meet virtually) to exchange information and views or explore or clarify a defined subject, problem, or area of knowledge, whether or not a published report results from such meeting.
- A meeting where a gathering discusses general matters as part of a normal course of doing business is not considered a conference.

3. **NASA** ([http://www.nasa.gov/pdf/668430main\\_Conference\\_Definition\\_07-16-12-508.pdf](http://www.nasa.gov/pdf/668430main_Conference_Definition_07-16-12-508.pdf))

Revised Definition of "Conference" 2.4.1 Definition. For purposes of this policy, the term "conference" means a "meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium or event that involves attendee travel." See the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR), 41 CFR 300-3.1.1

4. **OMB Memorandum M12-12** (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2012/m-12-12.pdf>)

"Conference" is defined in this memorandum as it is in the FTR, as "[a] meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium or event that involves attendee travel. The term 'conference' also applies to training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 CFR 410.404." See 41 CFR 300-3.1.

5. **Dept. of Justice** (<http://ojp.gov/funding/ccdefs.htm>)

"Conference is defined broadly, and includes meetings, retreats, seminars, symposiums, or training activities. See 41 C.F.R. § 300-3.1.

- A conference typically is a pre-arranged formal event with at least some of the following characteristics: Designated participants and/or registration, a published substantive agenda, and scheduled speakers or discussion panels on a particular topic.
- A conference typically is not a routine operational meeting, a law enforcement operation or prosecutorial activity in connection with a specific case or criminal activity, a testing activity, or a technical assistance visit. Please refer to the definitions of these set out below to decide whether your event requires prior approval and reporting under this guidance.”

6. **NIH** (<http://ethics.od.nih.gov/procedures/Conferences-Guide-10-May-2010.pdf>) (this is really detailed) references GAO decisions in discussing what is a conference and what is a meeting:

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has stated that a formal conference “typically involves topical matters of interest to, and the participation of, multiple agencies and/or nongovernmental participants.” National Institutes of Health—Food at Government-Sponsored Conferences, B-300826 at page 2 (March 3, 2005). Indicia of a formal conference are registration, a published substantive agenda, and scheduled speakers or discussion panels. See B-300826 at page 6.

On the other hand, GAO describes a meeting as a gathering that discusses “business matters internal to an agency or other topics that have little relevance outside of the agency.” B-300826 at page 6. Examples of these are day-long quarterly supervisors meetings discussing general/business management topics, suggestions, issues, and problems of the agency. Corps of Engineers—Use of Appropriated Funds to Pay for Meals, B-249795 (May 12, 1993). According to GAO, meetings that have these characteristics do not constitute formal conferences. See B-300826 at page 6.

DOD (<http://www.med.navy.mil/Pages/ConferenceInformation.aspx>) uses a broad definition:

The Department of Defense (DoD) is currently operating under very restrictive policy around the hosting and attending conferences. DoD has adopted a very expansive definition of “conference.” Conference is defined as “a meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium, or event that involves attendee travel.” Events within the local duty station that do not require attendee travel (i.e. local conferences) may also qualify as conferences for the purposes of this guidance if they involve payment of a registration/conference fee and/or take place in a hotel or conference center.

7. **Canada Government** (<http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=27228&section=text>) defines conferences as:

Conferences (Conférences) refers to a congress, convention, seminar, symposium or other formal gathering, which are usually organized by a third party external to government, where participants debate or are informed of the status of a discipline (e.g. sciences, economics, technology, management). (This definition is based on the object of expenditure 0823 Conference Fees of the Receiver General Chart of Accounts). Guest speakers are often part of such conferences that involve employees and/or non-

public servants. Retreats, work-planning meetings and training seminars or courses that provide training are not considered as conferences